

# THE OPEN COURT

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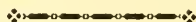
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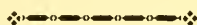
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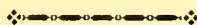
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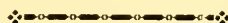


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WU TAO TZE'S NIRVANA PICTURE

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## WALKING ON THE WATER IN INDIAN LITERATURE<sup>1</sup>

BY W. NORMAN BROWN

### C. PSYCHIC POWER OF LEVITATION

Walking on the water is recognized in India as one of the stages of the psychic power of levitation, of which the highest grade is flying through the air. Levitation is very old in Hindu literature, appearing in Rigveda 10.136, and therefore being from before 800 B. C. This hymn describes the sun in terms of the earthly muni (ecstatic ascetic), and thus praises both.

1. The long-haired one (i. e., the sun as muni) carries the fire; the long-haired one carries the poison; the long-haired one carries heaven and earth. The long-haired one is all the sky which is to be seen; the long-haired one is here called the light.

2. The munis, wind-girdled, wear soiled yellow garments; they follow the course of the Wind when the gods have entered them.

3. Transported through the practise of muni-asceticism, we mount the winds; you mortals see only our bodies.

4. He flies through the air looking upon forms of every sort, the muni, who has become a friend to benefit every god.

5. Vāta's (the Wind's) horse, Vāyu's (the Wind's) friend is then the muni, incited by the gods. In both oceans he dwells, the eastern and the western.

6. Wandering on the path of the Apsarases, the Gandharvas, and wild beasts, is the long-haired one, who knows every desire, a friend sweet and most intoxicating.

7. Vāyu twirled for him, crushed the *kuṇnamās*, when the long-haired one drank from the cup of poison with Rudra.

This hymn shows us one of the ways in which the mystic experience of visiting the world of the gods may be induced: leaving his body behind, the muni ascends in spirit, being under the influence

<sup>1</sup> "Walking on the Water in Indian Literature," continued here from our January issue, is a chapter of a book by Professor W. Norman Brown, *The Indian and Christian Miracles of Walking on the Water*. Another chapter will follow in our March issue. The book is to be published by the Open Court Publishing Company in March.—Editor.

of some poison. Other ways of inducing similar exhilaration are developed in later times, Yoga practises of retaining the breath, fasting, and otherwise subduing the body, while the religions recognize the validity of the experience and legitimize the methods of achieving it. The next step was inevitable. Convinced that the experiences were genuine, religious adepts believed that they had them *in* the body, not out of it. Thus the religious ecstasy (*samādhi*) provides the basis for belief that the adepts could acquire magic powers, of which levitation is only one.

Defined with some exactitude, levitation appears in the second sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya of the Pali Buddhist canon, one of the oldest suttas, perhaps as old as the third century B. C.,<sup>19</sup> at the most conservative estimate not later than the first century B. C.,<sup>20</sup> and in other suttas of the same Nikāya. There it occurs in a long description of the attainments accompanying progress in the religious life, resulting from the practise of meditation. Well down the line, in fact just before arriving at the state of Nibbāna (Nirvāna), the adept acquires the Six Supernatural Powers. Of these the first is Magical Power, (*iddhi*, Skt. *ṛddhi*) one manifestation of which is walking on the water, and another flying through the air. Magical Power is thus described:<sup>21</sup>

With thoughts thus concentrated, purified, cleansed, stainless, free from contamination, impressionable, tractable, steadfast, immovable, he inclines, he bends down, his thoughts to the acquisition of the various kinds of Magic Power. He enjoys, one after another, the various kinds of magical power, the several varieties thereof:

Being one man, he becomes many men. Being many men, he becomes one man.

He becomes visible; he becomes invisible.

He passes through walls and ramparts and mountains without adhering thereto, as though through the air.

He darts up through the earth and dives down into the earth, as though in the water.

He walks on water without breaking through, as though on land.

He travels through the air cross-legged, like a bird on the wing.

He strokes and caresses with his hand the moon and the sun, so mighty in power, so mighty in strength.

He ascends in the body even to the World of Brahmā.

Such is Magical Power, the first of the Six Supernatural Powers, of which the others are the Heavenly Ear, Mind-reading, Recollection

<sup>19</sup>See Winternitz, *Geschichte der Indischen Litteratur*, 2.1.27; and Burlingame, *Buddhist Parables*, p. xxii.

<sup>20</sup>See Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy*, pp. 20, 24.

<sup>21</sup>Translation from Burlingame, *Buddhist Parables*, p. 252.

of Previous States of Existence, the Heavenly Eye, and Knowledge of the Means of destroying the Three Contaminations. Here, therefore, we see walking on the water as one of a group of supernatural abilities, with a definite place in a graded enumeration. Nor is walking on the water with the following power, flying through the air, mentioned only here in the Buddhist canonical literature. It appears also in the Majjhima and Aṅguttara Nikāyas of the Pali canon, and in the Ekottarāgama of the Mahāyāna,<sup>22</sup> and some Buddhist monks, such as Moggallāna are especially famous for magic accomplishments.

The Jains as well know such supernatural powers, and have technical names for them (*labdhi*, *śakti*, *ṛddhi*). A description of them appears in Hemacandra's Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacarita. I. 843-880, where verses 852-862 are of especial interest.<sup>23</sup>

They (certain Jaina sages) were able to reduce themselves into so minute a form that they could pass, like a thread, even through the eye of a needle.

They could heighten their bodies to such an extent that even Mount Sumeru would reach up only to their knees.

They could make the body so light that it was even lighter than air.

The gravity of their bodies surpassed that of Indra's thunderbolt, and hence their strength (i. e., strong blow) could not be borne by the gods Indra and others.

Their power of extension was such that they could touch while standing on earth, the planets or even the top of Mount Meru with their fingers as easily as we touch the leaves of a tree.

Their strength of will was so great that they could walk on water as on land, and could dive into or come out of the ground as if it were water.

Their supernatural powers with regard to worldly glory were such that they could gain for themselves the empire of a *cakravartin* (Universal Monarch) or of an Indra.

Unprecedented was their power by which they brought under control even wild beasts.

Their motion was so irresistible that they could enter into a mountain as easily as into a hole.

Their power of becoming invisible was so unchecked that they could remain invisible to all like the wind.

They were so skilful in assuming different forms at will that they could fill in the space of the universe with their multiple forms.

Again, walking on the water and flying through the air, appear in

<sup>22</sup>For references in the Majjhima, see index to the translation by Lord Chalmers, *Further Dialogues of the Buddha*, s. v. "Psychic power", Aṅguttara 3.6. For occurrence in the Ekottarāgama, See Edmunds, *Buddhist and Christian Gospels*, 4th ed., vol. 2, p. 30.

<sup>23</sup>Translation, with a few minor changes, from Amūlyacharan and Banārsi Dās Jāin, *Jaina Jātakas*, pp. 89 f.

the Yoga system, that great storehouse of magic practise dignified by philosophy and religion. These magic powers (*vibhūti*) are enumerated in the third book of Patañjali's "Yoga Sūtras", especially in sections 16-52, being by-products of Yoga practice, and among them are knowledge of the past and the future, knowledge of the cries of all living beings, knowledge of previous births, knowledge of another's mind-stuff, invisibility, cessation of hunger and thirst, penetration with one's self of another body, possession of the supernal-organ-of-hearing, levitation, and many others. In connection with our theme the aphorism 3.42 is noteworthy:<sup>24</sup> "Either as the result of constraint upon the relation between the body and the air (*ākāśa*), or (*ca*) as the result of the balanced-state of lightness, such as that of the cotton-fibre, there follows the passing through air."

While this aphorism does not mention walking on water, the commentary does. Again I quote from the translation by Woods: "Wherever there is a body there is air, because it (air) gives space to the body. The relation (of the body) with this (air) is that of obtaining (pervasion). By performing constraint upon this relation the yogin subjugates the relation with this (air). And gaining the balanced-state of lightness such as that of the cotton-fibre, even to (that of) atoms (of cotton-fibre), he becomes light himself. And by reason of this lightness he walks with both feet upon water. Next after this, however, he walks upon nothing more than a spider's thread, and then upon sunbeams. Thereafter he courses through the air at will."<sup>25</sup> Further, levitation (*laghiman*), with its opposite (*gariman*), is listed among the eight *mahāsiddhis* (super-powers) of the Yogis (see Garbe, *Sāṅkhya and Yoga*, p. 46).

Not only do these passages show us how ancient and how widespread in India are notions of levitation; they also point out the

<sup>24</sup>Translation by Woods, *Yoga-System of Patañjali*. The text of Patañjali is considered by Woods to have been "written at some time in the fourth or fifth century of our era" (p. xix); the commentary, which will be quoted below, is even later. Undoubtedly the aphorisms have a tradition much older than the text of Patañjali; but in any case the point need not be regarded as of importance for our purposes here. The antiquity of levitational notions is guaranteed for India by the citations from the Rīgveda and the Buddhist works above.

<sup>25</sup>It is possible that some such power was thought to belong to king Prthu Vāinya in Mahābhārata 7.69.9: "When he went to sea the waters were quiet; and the mountains gave him a road. The banner of his chariot never fell." This verse has been understood by Roy in his translation to mean that the sea became solid for him and the mountains opened themselves; but I do not believe his rendering justified by the text.

exact status of the art of walking on the water. It is a form of levitation, yet of a lower grade than flying; the more advanced in psychic evolution could fly; the less advanced could only walk on water. This fact needs emphasis, for it explains two things for us. In the first place, it shows us why religious celebrities, particularly the Buddha, do not walk on the water, but rather fly across it, disappear and suddenly reappear on the other side. For this, as far as my observation goes, is the case with the Buddha, the only personage concerning whom I have stories of crossing water magically that can be demonstrated to come from a remote antiquity. Being fully advanced in the Supernatural Powers he employs the more striking method; it is only lesser beings, lay disciples, that walk on the water. Hence, too, older Buddhist art shows so few illustrations, if any, of walking on the water; for it was devoted almost exclusively to portraying scenes from the Buddha's historical existence or his previous existences, and consequently exhibits scenes in which he flew across water, but none of walking.<sup>26</sup> In the second place, the lower grade of walking on water in the scale of levitational accomplishments explains why it appears so little in later Indian fiction, while flying through the air becomes a theme of indefinite productivity. The greater, more spectacular achievement is so much more widely adaptable for fairy tale purposes and religious legend that it has practically monopolized the field.

In view of the close connection between flying through the air across water and walking on the water, it is pertinent to men-

<sup>26</sup>Later Buddhism, especially in China and Japan, depicts scenes of crossing the water by walking on its surface or in some analogous manner. Thus Kwan Yin frequently is represented on a lotus or merely on her own feet crossing the ocean. Bodhidharma, the first Chinese patriarch, having occasion to cross the Yang-tsze, does so on a bamboo twig or a reed (for the legend, see in Giles, *Chinese Biographical Dictionary*, under "Bodhidharma"). I have in my possession modern colored prints illustrating these scenes. Similarly in Japan the rishi Chung-li Chüan crosses the sea on a sword; the scene is illustrated by a painting in the British Museum, which is reproduced in Morrison, *The Painters of Japan*; Anderson, *The Pictorial Arts of Japan*; and Binyon, *Japanese Art*, p. 43.. Two paintings by Morikage appear in *Kokka* for November, 1905, of Shoriken crossing the sea on a sword and of a sage with a book riding a carp through the waves; again in *Kokka*, January, 1906, is a picture of the hermit Ch'ing Kao crossing the sea on a carp's back; and two examples of Manjusri crossing the water appear in *Kokka*, July, 1926. Somewhat similar ideas appear elsewhere in China outside the Buddhist sphere: Shon Lao and the "eight immortals" have remarkable ways of crossing the sea. Illustrations on Ming pottery appear in R. L. Hobson, *The George Eumorfopoulos Collection, Catalogue of the Chinese, Korean, and Persian Pottery and Porcelain*, vol. IV (London: Benn, 1927), plate XXVII, D147 and plate XXIX, D143.



tion here three instances when the Buddha apparently flew across, particularly since one of these instances may have a relation to the legend of Jesus walking on the water. All three are of great age. The first describes the crossing of the Ganges shortly after the Great Enlightenment. The oldest version for Hīnayāna Buddhism is probably that in the Mahāparinibbāna sutta (No. 16) of the Dīgha Nikāya, which is perhaps from the third century B. C. and certainly no later than the first century B. C.<sup>27</sup> It is as follows:<sup>28</sup>

But the Exalted One went on to the river. And by that time the river Ganges was brimful and overflowing; and wishing to cross to the opposite bank, some began to seek boats, some for rafts of wood, while some made rafts of basket-work. Then the Exalted One as instantaneously as a strong man would stretch forth his arm, or draw it back again when he had stretched it forth, vanished from this side of the river, and stood on the further bank with the company of the brethren.

And the Exalted One beheld the people who wished to cross to the opposite bank looking some of them for boats and some of them for rafts of wood and some of them for rafts of basket-work; and as he beheld them he brake forth at that time into this song:

They who have crossed the ocean drear  
Making a solid path across the pools—  
Whilst the vain world ties its basket rafts—  
These are the wise, these are the saved indeed.

The oldest Mahāyāna version of the legend appears in the Lalita Vistara (chapter 26, Lefmann's text, p. 406). This work is preserved for us in a text that is undatable, but we do know that there was a text of it in existence about 300 A. D., when it was translated into Chinese as "the second translation of the Lalita Vistara".<sup>29</sup> We are therefore ignorant of the age of the work, although many of its materials, such as this story, are of pre-Christian antiquity. The variant there is interesting. The Buddha, after attaining the Great Enlightenment, set out for Benares, where, he says, "I shall create a brilliance without equal for a world that is blind . . . beat the drum of Immortality for a world that knows no sound . . . revolve the Wheel of the Law that has never been revolved in the worlds." Coming from the south, he arrives at the Ganges.

But at that time, monks, the great river Ganges was rolling along full up, level to the banks. Then, monks, the Tathāgata went up to the boatman to be carried across to the other bank. He said, "Gāutama, give me the fee for crossing." "My good man," replied the Tathāgata, "I have not the fee for crossing." So saying, he went from that bank to the other bank on a path through the sky.

<sup>27</sup>Cf. Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy*, pp. 20, 25.

<sup>28</sup>Translation following Rhys Davids *Dialogues of the Buddha* 3.94.

<sup>29</sup>See Winternitz, *Geschichte der Indischen Litteratur* 2.1.199.

The legend is one of wide range throughout Buddhist literature in all Buddhist countries.<sup>30</sup>

The magic power of the Buddha in the midst of water is again attested by a legend that occurs frequently in connection with the conversion of the Jaṭilas, the miracle-working Kāśyapa (Pali, Kassapa) brothers, at Uruvilva (Pali, Uruvelā) shortly after the Buddha attained enlightenment. The oldest preserved form is in the Vinaya Piṭaka of the Pali canon, Mahāvagga 1.20.16, where it is the last of the miracles preceding the conversion.

Now at that time a great rain fell out of season, and a great flood arose. The place where the Exalted One was dwelling was submerged with water. Then the Exalted One thought, "What if now I should drive away the water round-about and make my *caṅkrama* (promenade) in the midst thereof on a spot covered with dust".

And then the Exalted One drove away the water round-about and made his *caṅkrama* in the midst thereof on a spot covered with dust.

Then the Jaṭila Uruvelā Kassapa, fearful lest the Great Samaṇa might be swept away by the water, went in a boat with many Jaṭilas to the place where the Exalted One was dwelling. And the Jaṭila Uruvelā Kassapa, when he saw the Exalted One had driven away the water roundabout and was making his *caṅkrama* in the midst thereof on a spot covered with dust, spoke thus to the Exalted One, "Are you there, Great Samaṇa?"

"This is I, Kassapa," said the Exalted One; and flying through the air he reappeared in the boat.

This legend occurs in other texts and in sculpture. The latter occurrence is most important, for it is found among the bas-reliefs on the eastern gateway to the stupa at Sanchi.<sup>31</sup> In addition, therefore, to the evidence of its pre-Christian existence afforded by its appearance in the Mahāvagga, we have the testimony of archeology,

<sup>30</sup>A few other references are: Mahāvastu (ed. Senart) 3.328, lines 6-14; Avadānaśataka 3.7; Aśvaghōṣa's Buddhacarita 17.7 (allusion only, without narrative); Beal, *The Romantic Legend of Śākya Buddha*, pp. 246 f.; R. Spence Hardy, *A Manual of Buddhism*, pp. 195 f., Bigandet, *The Life or Legend of Gaudama the Buddha of the Burmese*, p. 149. A sculptured illustration of the miracle appears at Boro Budur; see Krom and Van Erp, *Beschrijving van Barabudur*, vol. I, p. 208; pictured in Series Ia, No. 115.

<sup>31</sup>First identified by Beal, *The Romantic Legend of Śākya Buddha*, 1875, p. xi, footnote. Beal's note is in connection with a Chinese version of the legend which appears in his translation on p. 302.

for that gateway was not later than the first century B. C.<sup>32</sup> The sculpture is worth a short description. It shows the waves, the three Kāśyapas rowing out to save the Buddha, and the Buddha himself serene amid the floods. The Buddha is not there in a human figure; he is indicated by a smooth rectangular slab below the waves, which is his *caṇḍakrama* "magic promenade"; for at that period of Buddhist art in Central India he was never represented in sculpture except symbolically.<sup>33</sup>

The third story about the Buddha magically crossing the water appears in the Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga 8.15.<sup>34</sup> and in the story of the present introducing Jātaka 489. The Vinaya occurrence must be pre-Christian. It concerns a visit the Buddha paid with his retinue of monks to the wise Visākhā, "the mother of Migāra", one of the outstanding feminine figures in Buddhist tradition. The night before a mighty rainstorm came that deluged the four quarters of the world, the last such storm, it happened, that was ever to take place. The text gives next a long account of how the Buddha ordered the bhikkhus to expose themselves to this rain, and of how Visākhā sent her maid to invite the holy men to dinner, with a series of stupid mistakes by the maid.

And the Blessed One said to the Bhikkhus: "Make yourselves ready, O Bhikkhus, with bowl and robe; the hour for the meal has come."

"Even so, Lord," said the Bhikkhus in assent to the Blessed One. And in the morning the Blessed One, having put on his undergarment, and being duly bowled and robed, vanished from the Jetavana as quickly as a strong man would stretch forth his arm when it was drawn in, or draw it in again when it was stretched forth, and appeared in the mansion of Visākhā the mother of Migāra. And the Blessed One took his seat on the seat spread out for him, and with the company of the Bhikkhus.

Then said Visākhā the mother of Migāra: "Most wonderful, most marvellous is the night and the power of the Tathāgata, in that though the floods are rolling on knee-deep,

<sup>32</sup>Foucher, *The Beginnings of Buddhist Art and Other Essays*, p. 67, would put it in the first or second century B. C. Marshall, writing later and with fuller knowledge of the Sanchi remains, says in the *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, p. 627, ". . . the four gateways . . . can hardly be relegated to an earlier date than the last half century before the Christian era."

<sup>33</sup>See Foucher, *op. cit.*, p. 19. He has a description of our bas-relief on pp. 99 f. The bas-relief has been pictured frequently; two easily obtained illustrations appear in Barnett, *Antiquities of India*, plate XX, facing p. 212; V. A. Smith, *History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon*, fig. 48, on p. 80. Our scene is on the face of the left hand pillar, third panel from the top.

<sup>34</sup>Translated by Rhys Davids, *Sacred Books of the East* 17.216 ff., from which is taken the quotation below.

and though the floods are rolling on waist-deep, yet is not a single Bhikkhu wet, as to his feet or as to his robes." And glad and exalted in heart she served and offered with her own hand to the company of the Bhikkhus, with the Buddha at their head, sweet food, both hard and soft.

Neither this text nor that of Jātaka 489 makes clear whether the Buddha and his bhikkhus walked on the surface of the water or flew through the air, but the suddenness with which they arrive at their destination seems to indicate that they flew.

Here we close the chapter as far as concerns the Buddha. He does not walk on the water; he does not need to. Having complete powers of levitation, he flies across it, and leaves to those who are less perfect the lesser miracle of walking on it. I would call especial attention to the second legend I related, that of the conversion of the Kāśyapas, as illustrated at Sanchi, which seems to bear a relationship to the legend of Jesus walking on the water. I shall take up the point later in this paper.

There remains one Buddhist legend showing walking on the water by means of levitation, which is of the utmost importance for the purpose of this paper. It is one of a group illustrating the magical crossing of water, but with variation of the means of effecting the miracle, and I shall therefore discuss it in a section devoted to that group alone.

#### D. THE STORY OF YASA AND ITS MUTATIONS

For the purposes of this paper the most important group of legends illustrating the theme of walking on the water is one that starts with the story of Yasa, the Buddha's sixth convert. This is one of the oldest bits of Buddhist hagiography and seems to furnish incidents that later became attached to the person of the Buddha himself. It occurs first in the Mahāvagga 1.7.10, where it may well be earlier than 300 B. C.<sup>35</sup> In that version there is no mention of walking on the water. This Yasa was a rich young man of Benares, who lived in luxury and sensual delight with his many wives. Waking one night while they were all asleep, he looked at the unlovely attitudes in which they were lying, noticed their repulsive habits, such as snoring, grinding the teeth, dribbling at the mouth, and became disgusted with sensualism and worldliness in general. Then he gave utterance to the exclamation, "Alas

<sup>35</sup>See Winternitz, *Geschichte der Indischen Litteratur*, 2.120.

what distress! Alas, what danger!" He put on his gilt slippers and went to the gate of his house. Non-human beings opened the gate, in order that no human being might prevent him from leaving the world and going forth into the houseless state. Then he went to the gate of the city, and there again non-human beings opened it. Then he went to the deer park of Isipatana at Sarnath, where the Buddha had only recently preached his first sermon. At that time, it being dawn, the Blessed One was walking up and down in the open air, and when he saw Yasa coming he took a seat. The latter approached giving utterance to the solemn exclamation, "Alas, what distress! Alas, what danger!" but the Blessed One answered, "Here is no distress, Yasa; here is no danger. Come here, Yasa, and sit down; I will teach you the law."

The Buddha then converted Yasa. But Yasa's mother began to grieve that her son had gone away and sent his father to seek him. The latter tracked him to the Buddha, of whom he inquired whether or not he had seen Yasa. The Buddha, however, had made Yasa invisible, and when the question was asked he answered evasively. Then he preached to the father, establishing him part way on the road to conversion, after which he made Yasa visible, for now the father would be content to have his son enter the religious life. The father took his son home, and the Buddha came too, converting Yasa's mother and wife, who became the first female lay disciples.

We have already pointed out in section "I. B." that the latter part of this story bears a close resemblance to the later tale of King Kappina and Queen Anojā who crossed rivers by means of an Act of Truth, and this one fact would be enough to make us suspect that the legend of Yasa also contains in its tradition some miraculous feat of crossing water. In fact it does, but not by an Act of Truth. The variants and descendants of this tale exhibit our theme in another guise.

As everyone knows who has gone from Benares to Sarnath, where the Buddha preached his first sermon and where he was residing when Yasa went to visit him, a small stream flows between the two named Varāṇā, the modern Barṇā. The stream is of sufficient depth even in the dry winter months not to be fordable, and when Yasa arrived at its banks, it would naturally provide an obstacle to his further advance. Variants of the legend take this fact



into consideration. In the Chinese account, as translated by Beal, the Buddha goes to the bank of the Varāṇā to meet him. Then we read as follows:<sup>36</sup>

. . . Sākra caused a bright light to go before him . . . Yasada advanced slowly to the bank of the river Varanā. Now, at this time the river had suddenly become very shallow, and all along the banks birds were feeding in great numbers; when lo! the light which had gone before him suddenly disappeared, and Yasada was left alone in the gloom. He then began to bewail his unhappy condition, on which Buddha, from the other bank of the river, caused his body to emit a dazzling brightness, and with his arms stretched out towards Yasada, he exclaimed, "Welcome! Welcome, O Yasada! There is nothing to fear here! There is no danger here! Nought but rest and peace and perfect independence!" . . . Yasada, hearing the words of the Buddha, lost every remnant of fear and anxiety, and experienced a sense of complete repose. Then Yasada, filled with joy, took off his jewelled slippers, laid them on the bank, and entered the river Varanā to cross over it; he left them there just as a man who rejects spittle from his mouth leaves it, nor thinks of it again. Then, on account of the shallowness of the water, Yasada soon passed over, and having approached toward the spot where Buddha was, and beholding all the excellencies of his person, he fell down before him in humble adoration and worshipped him. Then, arising, he stood on one side. Hereupon Buddha, having preached to Yasada, and declared to him the character of the four sacred truths, behold, he received enlightenment, and like pure water his heart was cleansed from every remnant of care.

The sequel of this tale is close to the account in the Mahāvagga summarized above.

There can be no doubt that a miracle was performed here. The Buddha, going to the bank of the river, made it shallow so that Yasada could cross, and Yasada clearly got across by wading. These two elements at once recall elements in the Rigvedic legends of crossing rivers, where Indra makes the river shallow and the Aryans cross by wading (see in section "I. A."), and are therefore simply an expression in a new environment of the oldest manner reported in India for achieving the miracle of magically crossing water.

In another variant Yasa actually walks on water, although not on the way to the Buddha; the incident is transposed. This is in the

<sup>36</sup>*The Romantic Legend of Sākya Buddha*, pp. 263 f.

Mahāvastu.<sup>37</sup> As in the Mahāvagga it is merely stated that Yaśoda (variant of name Yasa) crossed the Varāṇā and was converted by the Buddha. It is not stated how he got across, although it is later said that his parents, searching for him, found his sandals on the hither bank. But after being converted he obtained the magic powers (*ṛddhi*) enumerated above in section "I. C." and with the consent of the Buddha he exhibited them all to convert a multitude of heretics.<sup>38</sup> Among these "stunts" he "walked on water without breaking through just as on land" (*sayyathāpi nāma udake pi abhidhamāno gacchati tadyathāpi nāma pṛthivīyam*).

The incident of Yasa's crossing the Varāṇā is now extracted from its environment and incorporated in another story of which we have at least two versions recorded. In one of them, a Chinese tale from Indian sources, the hero wades through water, as does Yasa in the Chinese account of his conversion; in the other, a Pali story, he walks on the surface of the water as does Yasa in the Mahāvastu. The Chinese story appears in a commentary on Dharmatrāta's version of the Dhammapada. Dharmatrāta is thought to have lived about 50 B. C. to 10 A. D. His version of the Dhammapada appears in China in several recensions, the oldest containing merely the stanzas, others expanded with additional material. The oldest of the expanded versions is the Fa kiu p'i yu king "book of parables connected with the book of scriptural texts (*i. e.*, the Dhammapada), and was translated from Indian sources by the monks Fa-kiu and Fa-li between 265 and 316 A. D. Our story is not datable, although Beal (p. 25) thinks it about as old as Dharmatrāta himself. It is as follows.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup>Ed. Senart, vol. 3, pp. 401 ff., especially pp. 408-410.

<sup>38</sup>Cf. in Mahāvagga 5.1.7, where the Buddha allows the venerable Sāgata to perform miracles by the use of Magic Power so that the people honoring him, the disciple, will still more honor the Buddha himself, the Master.

<sup>39</sup>Information about Dharmatrāta and the Chinese versions of his Dhammapada drawn from Beal, *Texts from the Buddhist Canon*, pp. 3 f., and Chavannes, *Cinq cents contes et apologues extraits du Tripitaka Chinois*, vol. 3, p. 309, and supplemented for date from Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 154 Translation following Chavannes, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 314 ff. There is a less exact translation by Beal, *op. cit.*, section IV, pp. 61 f.

Dr. Burlingame, however, calls my attention to an entry in Bunyiu Nanjio's rare *Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka* (Oxford, 1883), which I have not been able to see. Here our legend seems to be mentioned in the Dharapadāvadānasūtra composed by Dharmatrāta whom I have mentioned above, and Dharmatrāta is said to have been the maternal uncle of one Vasumitra. This Vasumitra was one, if not the chief, of the five hundred Arhats who formed the celebrated synod convoked by Kanishka, a monarch whose dates are the subject of great dispute, but at the latest not later than 160 A. D.,

At one time to the southeast of Chōwei (Śrāvastī) there was a great river with waves deep and wide. On its banks dwelt more than five hundred families, but they had as yet never heard of the practice of wisdom and virtue, which is the salvation of the world. They were given to deeds of violence and endeavored constantly to deceive one another; they were greedy for worldly prosperity and delivered over to their passions; they made themselves merry and fostered intemperate desires.

The Honored of the World continually reflected that they should be saved and that he ought to go save them; he knew that these several families had the good fortune that they ought to be saved. Accordingly then the Buddha went to the river bank and sat down under a tree. The village people, seeing the distinctive mark of the Buddha's glory, were astonished and there was none of them that was not filled with respect: all approached to pay him reverence, some prostrating themselves, others bowing to him, others asking his tidings. The Buddha ordered them to be seated and expounded for them the teaching of the scriptures. When these people heard him speak, they believed him not at all; they were, indeed, accustomed to deceit and carelessness, and to the words of truth they did not add faith.

The Buddha then miraculously created a man coming from the south of the river; his feet walked upon the water, and it was only just as if he sank to the ankle. He came before the Buddha, bowed his head to the ground, and worshipped him.

All the people had witnessed this, and there was not one who was not wonderstruck. They asked the miraculous man, "Our families, from our earliest ancestors, have dwelt on the bank of this river. Now we have never heard tell that a man walked upon the water. Who then are you, and what is your magic recipe for walking upon the water without sinking?"

The miraculous man answered them, "I am a simple and ignorant man from the south of the river. Having heard say that the Buddha was here, I was anxious to gladden myself with his wisdom and virtue. When I arrived at the southern bank, it was not the time when the river was fordable; but

I asked the people who were on the bank of the river what and now put by Rapson, on the basis of Marshall's excavations at Takṣaśilā, "somewhere about the end of the first century A. D." (*Cambridge History of India*, vol. 1, p. 583). This would make the date of our Buddhist story quite as early as that of Matthew's Gospel. Dr. Burlingame also informs me that Mr. Franklin Hō states that Chavannes' translation of the Chinese text is incorrect. The correct translation is "the Buddha took the form of a man", not "miraculously created a man" (paragraph 3 of my translation below). He adds, "The Chinese symbol is the same that is used to denote the *nirmāṇakāya*, the 'magic body'" (see Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy*, pp. 271-272). I have not ventured, however, to change Chavannes translation; the point is after all not of major consequence in this connection.

was the depth of the water. They replied that the water would reach to my ankle, and that nothing would prevent me from crossing. I added faith to their words, and I have therefore come crossing the river. I have no extraordinary recipe."

The Buddha praised him, saying, "Well done! Well done! Truly, the man with faith in the absolute truths is able to cross the gulf of births and deaths. What is there extraordinary about it then that he should be able to cross a river several *li* wide." Then the Buddha pronounced these stanzas: "Faith (*śraddhā*) can cross the gulf. . . ."

While this story is not the story of Yasa, it owes much to it, and may be considered to be in its line of tradition. So too another tale, which has an intimate relation with the Chinese legend. This is the celebrated story of the present introducing Jātaka 190, which has often been compared with the story of Peter walking on the water, but as far as I am aware has never before been fixed in its Indian environment. It is as follows:<sup>40</sup>

*Behold the fruit of faith!* This parable was related by the Teacher while he was in residence at Jetavana monastery. At eventide he reached the bank of the river Aciravati, after the boatman had beached his boat and gone to hear the preaching of the Doctrine.

Not seeing a boat, he had recourse to the Practice of Meditation, concentrated his thoughts on the Buddha, attained the Ecstasy of Joy, and descended into the river. His feet did not sink in the water. He walked along as though he were walking on the surface of the land until he came to mid-stream. Then he saw waves. Then the Ecstasy of Joy, the result of the concentration of his thoughts on the Buddha, became weak. Then his feet began to sink. But he concentrated his thoughts anew on the Buddha, strengthened the Ecstasy of Joy, walked on the surface of the water as before, entered Jetavana monastery, bowed to the Teacher, and sat down on one side.

The Teacher exchanged greetings with him, and asked: "Lay disciple, I trust that as you came hither, you came hither without weariness." "Reverend Sir, I had recourse to the Practice of Meditation, concentrated my thoughts on the Buddha, attained the Ecstasy of Joy, obtained support on the surface of the water, and came hither as though I were treading the earth."

The incident then affords the Buddha an opportunity to tell an old world story of mariners whose recourse to the virtues brought them safety in time of danger.

<sup>40</sup>Translation by Burlingame, *Buddhist Parables*, p. 186.

The translation I have quoted should be noticed for one point in particular. The words in the third and fourth paragraphs, "he had recourse to the Practice of Meditation, concentrated his thoughts on the Buddha, attained the Ecstasy of Joy," are a fulsome but correct translation by Burlingame of the Pali *buddhārammaṇaṃ pītiṃ gahetvā*, a phrase which most other translators have not rendered correctly. The "Ecstasy of Joy (*pīti*)" is the first of the four trances (*Jhāna*) or Ecstasies, that which is accompanied by joy and ease (*pīti-sukha*); and it is these trances that bring to the adept the Magical Powers, of which walking on the water is one (see above in section "I. C.").<sup>41</sup>

In the pair of stories here retold from the Chinese and the Pali Jātaka-book another Buddhist doctrine makes its appearance, namely faith (*śraddhā*, Pali *saddhā*). Although we cannot say that the Buddha emphasized this doctrine, we know it is quite old in Buddhism: "faith is the means by which a man may cross the depths of the river of existence to the safety of Nirvāṇa; the teaching of the Buddha saves him who has faith, but destroys the faithless". Faith and reason operate together for him who would lead the religious life and be saved.<sup>42</sup> The Chinese version speaks only of faith; the Jātaka is more consistent; it fills in the gap; by means of faith in the Buddha one can meditate upon him and attain the *jhānas* (Ecstasies)—in fact the Buddha, the Dhamma (Law), and the Order are formally listed among the Ten Reflections that aid one to attain Ecstasy—and by means of the *jhānas* one attains Magic Power.

The text in which the Jātaka story is found cannot be dated earlier than the fifth century A. D., a fact which has often been unduly emphasized;<sup>43</sup> for the truth is, as we now see, that the elements of the tale are drawn from exceedingly ancient sources, and the tale itself is the culmination of a long legendary tradition. In

<sup>41</sup>For an inadequate translation, see in E. J. Thomas, *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History* (1927), p. 241—"finding joy in making Buddha the object of his meditation."

<sup>42</sup>Cf. Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy*, pp. 34 f., from whom I have made the quotation. Keith gives appropriate references to the Pali Scriptures.

<sup>43</sup>Cf. the rather cavalier treatment this story receives from Kennedy, *JRAS*, 1917, p. 528, and from Hopkins, *History of Religions*, p. 195 and p. 196, footnote, who refers to this, without specifically naming it, as one of the "four 'parallels' now recognized by Garbe," of which "two are not found till c. 500 A. D."—these are presumably the feeding of the multitude and the walking on the water—"a third may be as late"—presumably the Angel Chorus and presentation to Simeon—"and the fourth (the temptation) is of a very general character."



view of these facts, we have good reason to accept the implication of the Pali text that the story, so well grounded, is ancient; it certainly could have been; and since the Jātakas, like most Indian works, are absolutely devoid of any consciousness of time or textual historicity, we may more easily accept their implication here than reject it.

#### E. SUMMARY CONCERNING THE THEME AS IT APPEARS IN INDIA

The investigation we have made so far justifies the following conclusions:

1. Walking on the water is only one of several ways of crossing water magically that have been recognized in India, and in stories have been interchangeable. The ways are: (*a*) with the help of a deity, first occurrence in the Rigveda; (*b*) by means of the magic power of truth, known long before the Christian era; (*c*) by the psychic power of levitation, of which walking on the water is the lower form, while flying through the air is the higher, also found before the Christian era; (*d*) with the aid of the Buddha. The manner of crossing water is: (*a*) wading through water that has miraculously become shallow; (*b*) flying across it; or (*c*) walking on its surface.

2. The chief stories illustrating the theme are Buddhist, and in them the Buddha never walks on the water; he only flies across it, or disappears and reappears in another place. It is lesser persons who walk upon its surface.

3. The important story of the lay disciple in the story of the present introducing Jataka 190 is not an isolated legend, but is composed of elements, some of which come from the earliest antiquity in India, and represents a continuous, yet cumulative, tradition from before 800 B. C. In its final form, in spite of the late date of the literary redaction of the text in which it appears, there is more reason to believe it pre-Christian than post-Christian.